

## BLIZZARD OF '49, WYOMING PUBLIC TELEVISION ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Speaker 1: Okay. Carmen, just start out. Give me your name for the camera.

Carmen: I'm Carmen Taryl Shane. I was twelve years old and we lived about 15 miles south of Lusk and it was an absolutely beautiful day, and then it turned bad. We started out after the sheep. All we had was a car and my dad put a couple of 5 gallon buckets of corn in the truck and he knew where they would drift and we found them there. He started back leading them to the house and he would shake a bucket with corn and black faced sheep will follow you wherever for a bite of corn. Finally the wind got so bad he couldn't breathe, so he put one bucket over his head so it would break the wind so he could breathe walking. We got them to the house and put them in the barn, then after the storm was over when dad had to cut a hole in the barn to get the out, the doors were all drifted shut so he cut a small hole and they came out.

We already had the feed in the corral there for them, and they were eating and then this plop and another one, plop, and it had been so warm in the barn and then when we let them out they got quick pneumonia and that was it.

Speaker 1: They died?

Carmen: Yeah. Then some in another barn, it wasn't as tight and [00:02:00] and then the snow just kept getting deeper and deeper in there so that the sheep had their backs up on the rafters and so then he had to cut another hole so we could get them out of that. They were older ewes and weren't as strong, so he would take them out and put them on a slab and then we would get them to a different place that was better for them so we could take care of them better.

Speaker 1: As the snow was coming into this barn they were stomping it down, but it kept ...

Carmen: Getting deeper and deeper. Their backs were against the rafters.

Speaker 1: Did he cut a hole in the roof.

Carmen: No, I think it was in the front or some place, I don't remember that, so he could get them out. During a storm one day I went out to check on Steph and see what he can do. He thought he was headed back to the house and we had a barn with a shed roof and fortunately he fell off the shallow end, the lower end. He was going the wrong way exactly opposite from the direction he should have been going. Then he got some direction and he did get to the house, but I don't think he went out after that. He had tied a rope from the house to the barn, but then

after that they would just try to go and see what they could do. I remember the cattle after the storm, their heads would be down and there would be an icicle [00:04:00] from their jaws from their chin to the ground and I said they were welded to the ground and dad would have to take an ax and chop them loose.

We had our neighbors, the Hoys and their folks was the [inaudible 00:04:26] and Anna Altar, and we knew that their sheep were all gone, so we would go down the car and to a draw and it was so full. It was a deep draw but it was so full you could just walk straight across. Then we'd get in their jeep, all of us, and we went over there and Raymond Hoy, my own husband had walked the two miles over after the storm to see if [inaudible 00:05:05] and Anna were okay. They were, but they had gone looking for their sheep and they couldn't find the band. The reason was because they had scattered. We found that out after the storm. Anyway, so then they started back and Anna was getting so cold and so tired when they got to what they called their turkey house, she wanted to stop there and take a little rest and he knew that they couldn't do that, that hypothermia was setting in. He pretty well drug her to the house and got her warmed up.

Then we went over there are each of us, all the kids and the adults, we all had a piece of pump rod and you'd stick it in the [00:06:00] snow and if it bounced back then you knew you found a sheep. Then we called them in and they would just dig them out and just make a tiny hole because they were encased in the snow and everything, but it was so cold outside. Just a tiny. We found a few and we'd get them out, but their legs, they'd been curled up for so long and everything. We saved a few, but very few. They lost their herd.

Let's see. my dad drove the school bus after the storm. It was just a car, but to get it started they would put fuel in a pan under the crank case and set that on fire to get the oil warmed up so the cars would start. Then you just went wherever on the hilltops and wherever just around the drifts. This was quite a long time after the storm so you could get some place, but you didn't follow a road any place.

Speaker 1: You could travel in cars over the hard snow or are you going around bare patches between the drifts?

Carmen: Bare patches between the drifts.

Speaker 1: Yeah. I got you.

Carmen: There weren't any four wheel drives or anything like that. Mostly what they had to work with was, like Jimmy's folks, was a shovel, a team of horses and a wagon and you hauled it out , [00:08:00] loaded the trailers, then you shoveled it off and started it over again.

Speaker 1: Now where was your family home?

Carmen: South of Lusk. About 15 miles south of Lusk.

Speaker 1: Was the house fairly warm? What did you use for fuel and heat?

Carmen: We did have an oil furnace, so yeah. We were pretty good, but you just stayed in the main rooms because you couldn't heat everything. You shut everything else off. You just stayed in small spaces.

Speaker 1: You had plenty to eat?

Carmen: My mother assured we had plenty to eat. She had lots of things that stored.

Speaker 1: Be prepared.

Carmen: Canned things and things like that. Yeah.

Speaker 1: You were talking about buildings having such strong roofs and sheep walking out onto the roofs.

Carmen: Maybe that was [Sabins 00:09:22]. Didn't they get the [Sabins 00:09:25] out of the roof?

Speaker 1: I don't remember that.

Carmen: I think some did. Wouldn't they have straw roof? Did they have wire and then straw and then wire on top. Yes. They would take that off so they could get the critters off that way because their backs would be on the rafters also.

Speaker 1: How long were you stranded on your homestead [00:10:00] during the blizzards? Do you recall?

Carmen: Raymond and I had a jeep, so we did go back and forth that way. Other than that I don't remember we went any place else. We didn't get to town.

Speaker 1: You didn't?

Carmen: No. It was quite a long time before we went to school.

Speaker 1: As a kid did that make you happy you didn't have to go to school?

Carmen: Yeah, sure.

Speaker 1: Being a ranch kid I guess you had a lot of chores.

Carmen: We had a lot of chores and we all just went and helped the folks do whatever was necessary to do.

Speaker 1: No, maybe the weather was too bad anyways, about having fun in the snow as a kid?

Carmen: I guess we just did because that's what there was to entertain you. You didn't have TV or anything like that.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Do you remember playing during the blizzard in the snow?

Carmen: I'm sure we did.

Speaker 1: Not during it.

Carmen: Not during the storm at all. Not during. Not at all.

Speaker 1: During the clearing periods. Those snow drifts must have been kind of fun.

Carmen: Oh, afterwards, yeah. During the storm, especially every time dad would go out it was very frightening. It seemed like he was gone a very long time before they would come back.

Speaker 1: That bucket over his head just is ...

Carmen: Yeah. That was to cut the wind. The wind was so strong he couldn't breathe, but the bucket would cut it.

Speaker 1: How was he able to see? He had to peek from time to time.

Carmen: Yeah, I'm sure of that. They were following a fence so that helped. [00:12:00]

Speaker 1: Good. Anything else you can think of? I think you covered everything that we talked about before.

Carmen: Okay.

Speaker 1: Did you have to shovel snow?

Carmen: Oh, yeah. Ranch kids, you help the folks whatever's necessary. You didn't shovel snow. You chopped. It was so hard you had to chop a chunk. Then what you dug out today, like Timmy said, it filled in and you did it again tomorrow. The people worked terribly hard to help their livestock.

Speaker 1: Did you know of any neighbors with really bad stock loss?

Carmen: [inaudible 00:13:00] and Anna.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that you talked about. What about the military? Do you recall the military being around or any of the air drops or anything like that? Do you recall any families getting provisions dropped to them?

Carmen: I don't.

Speaker 1: I think some did.

Carmen: I'm sure they did, but I don't. We didn't.

Speaker 1: Good. Thanks, Carmen.

Carmen: Oh, you're welcome.

Speaker 1: All right. That's a cut.